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## Maine Fire Marshal News, July 2009

Maine Office of State Fire Marshal

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#### PREVENTION \* LAW ENFORCEMENT \* RESEARCH

## Maine Fire Marshal News

Maine State Fire Marshal's Office • Fire Research Maine Department of Public Safety Fire Marshal's Web Page

July 2009

Summer 2009 Vol. 2, Issue No. 3

#### **WELCOME!**

Welcome to another issue of the Maine Fire Marshal News. Please take some time to read the newsletter and send us your own article for a future publication or comments in general. As always, we do appreciate the feedback on the newsletter many of you have sent over the past few years and look forward to hearing from you more in the future.



#### A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

Well I'm sorry to report that warm weather has not reached Maine as I'd suggested in the last issue of the newsletter but...this is Maine. Still we hope you're enjoying the summer.

I'd like to take a moment to reflect upon some significant pieces of legislation passed during this past session of the 124<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature and discuss a trend we hope will continue through the second half of 2009.

Many have called our office with questions regarding the "flue bill" which has

In this issue	
A Message from the Fire Marshal	1-2
Westbrook Fire Sprinkler Ordinance	3
Fire Marshal's Summer Interns	3-4
NFPA Fire Prevention Week 2009	4
A Note From Senator Collins	5- 6
Juvenile Firesetter Panel	6
Stability of Engineered Lumber	6
MEFIRS	7
Maine Firewatch	8 - 9
Month in Fire History & Upcoming Events	9-11

nothing to do with the HIN1 virus. This legislation, Chapter 250 "An Act to Permit the Use of a Common Flue for Oil and Solid Fuel **Burning Equipment**" allows people in Maine to use a common flue to discharge exhaust from both an oil burning heating appliance and wood burning stove provided there is sufficient draft from each appliance, the chimney is lined and structurally intact, and a carbon monoxide alarm is installed near a bedroom. The chimney flue must also have been in use prior to February 2, 1998. Though the Fire Marshal's Office, insurance interests, and manufacturers of wood burning and pellet stoves (in their literature) may not have supported the bill directly for various reasons, we recognize it is the law of the land in Maine and therefore believe it should be brought to your attention. Future rules made by this office will reflect the intent of this legislation.

Speaking of carbon monoxide, the legislature addressed that issue as well. Chapter 162, "An Act to Protect Maine Citizens from Home Fires and Carbon Monoxide" was enacted and will require a smoke detector to be installed in single family dwellings in each area within or giving access to bedrooms. Detectors installed within 20 feet of a kitchen must be photoelectric. In apartments, the landlord must have smoke detectors in place at the time of occupancy. Upon sale and transfer of either a single family or multi-apartment dwelling, those acquiring the property must certify that the structure is provided with detectors and documents must be signed verifying this.

Fire Marshal's Message cont'd from page 1

Under Chapter 162 the owner of a multifamily dwelling must install carbon monoxide detectors. Owners of an existing single family dwelling who are adding onto, or restoring the home, must also install CO detectors. If a structure is being converted to a single family dwelling it must likewise be equipped with CO detectors. In all instances, the detectors are to be placed within an area given access to bedrooms. Those acquiring such property must follow sale and transfer requirements similar to those applicable to smoke detectors.

Given the number of injuries and deaths related to CO poisoning that have occurred in Maine over the past five years in addition to deaths and injuries from fire that could have been avoided with operating smoke alarms, the Fire Marshal's Office supported this bill. These are just two bills of interest to the fire and emergency service and health communities that were passed this year. We encourage everyone to look at the legislation for themselves as this message only covers some of the major issues addressed in the public law. The Fire Marshal's Office will also be addressing the carbon monoxide issue through rule making currently in the planning stage.

The trend I wanted to mention is the lower than feared number of fire fatalities we've experienced thus far this year. We've had seven, including two double fatals. However, last year at this time we had eleven deaths all in separate incidents. As you know there was considerable concern that a cold winter combined with soaring heating prices was triggering a rush to purchase alternative heating devices and less-than-seasoned wood which might increase the number of fatal fires.

Though seven fire deaths, is seven too many, during the same six month period in the previous ten years (1999-08) the average number of fire fatalities has been ten. We've had two years where we lost fourteen during the first six months with ten and eleven deaths being the

most common count. So why in a year when there was so much concern did we see such a relatively low number?

This winter I saw the fire service in Maine, other state agencies, and private sector forces such as the insurance and real estate industry all step up to provide their various constituencies with information about heating related fire dangers in addition to the need for mitigation systems such as smoke alarms.

The Fire Marshal's Office ran a long playing and frequently viewed series of heating fire safety public service announcements. Members of our staff appeared in television news segments and programs and made a point to mention heating fire safety issues. Fire departments ran many notices on heating fire safety on their web pages as we did.

Though we can't prove definitively that the public awareness efforts made by numerous organizations kept this past winter season's fire fatal tally low, the goal of all these efforts was to do just that. As an optimist I do believe that we can engineer fire safety into structures, we can enforce fire safety related laws, but we can also have an impact with well planned and targeted public awareness messages.

On that optimistic note let me wish you a dry, warm and safe August and September ahead.

Sincerely,

John C. Dean Fire Marshal



www.homefiresprinkler.org

## WESTBROOK FIRE SPRINKLER ORDINANCE

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

We'd like to congratulate Westbrook Fire Chief Daniel Brock and Lt. Charles Jarrett for successfully adopting an ordinance requiring all new one and two family dwellings be built with sprinkler systems.

Westbrook's fire code, now among the strictest in the state incorporated the 2009
National Fire Protection Association's *Life Safety Code* with the requirement that new homes built in Westbrook be sprinkled. Chief Brock and Lt. Jarrett previously presented data on fire in Westbrook, Maine, and the nation in making their case in addition to details about sprinkler systems and the advantages sprinkler systems will provide residents of Westbrook.

In addition to Chief Brock and Lt. Jarrett a real estate agent, developers, sprinkler contractors and others spoke for and in opposition to the ordinance. Opposition to the ordinance focused primarily not on sprinklers themselves or the cost but rather the timing of the ordinance. Some believe that to add any additional cost to homes at this time will worsen an already poor housing market. Chief Brock pointed out that timing is important to him as well, and added that newer homes are often built with pre-engineered woods and other materials that lead to more rapid fire spread and potential structure collapse which are dangerous to both residents and fire service personnel.

The Westbrook Fire Department had made efforts in years past to adopt the sprinkler requirement but it had been delayed. With this success Westbrook becomes Maine's Scottsdale and will be watched closely in the coming years to see how well this technology, now over 100 years old, does in fact reduce the cost and overall burden of fire for the residents of Westbrook. Some other towns in Maine already require sprinklers in one and two family dwellings but only in subdivisions. Hopefully, more will follow Westbrook.

# FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE SUMMER INTERNS DELIVER FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY MESSAGE TO MAINE'S CHILDREN

The Fire Marshal has acquired the services of two University of Maine System students this summer to deliver fire prevention and safety education to children at Maine childcare centers and homes. The interns are participating in the Maine State Government Internship Program. The following article written by Abbie Dodge describes their summer experience.

As summer interns with the Maine State Fire Marshall's Office, Ryan and I have journeyed to all corners of the state in order to ask three-to-five year-olds a very important question: "What might your mom or dad use to make a fire?" These are some of the answers we have received:

"Stars...in the sky"

"Fireworks!"

"Water?"

"Gas" (Oops...)

"A gun" (We think this came from a video game the child played at home...)

Our official titles are "Fire and Life Safety Educator". We are using the "Play Safe Be Safe" program (developed by the Bic lighter company) and the infamous "Hazard House" to teach children about fire safety. Over the summer, we have realized that no two child care centers are alike. We receive many reactions from the kids as we walk into their classroom bright and early in the morning. Usually it is "Are we gonna get to see the firetruck?" and/or "Fire safety? But we don't have any fires in my house!" Our personal favorite is a young girl who held up her "outside shoes" for us to see, and proclaimed, "I have dirty crocs!"

Of course, it becomes a little complicated when the teachers or childcare providers are under the impression that we are actually firefighters and have brought our firetruck along for the children to see.

The normal chaos of a child care center (usually) settles down within a few minutes, and we begin our presentations. For 3-5 year-olds, the "Play Safe Be Safe" program covers "crawl low under smoke", "stop, drop, and roll" and "safe for play/keep away". School-aged students are lucky enough to experience the "Hazard House", which is a large, interactive doll-house that boasts fire hazards, smoke, electrical short circuits, a smoke detector noise, and a "hot" door.

This is the second year that the Fire Marshal's Office has sent out students to do fire safety presentations, but the first summer for Ryan and I. Our goals as we began making appointments were to visit more children than last year, and all 16 counties. As we finished up our fourth week of presentations today, we have been south to Portland, west to Bethel, and as far east as Machias. Some of the exotic locales we will visit later in the summer include a ferry trip to Peak's Island (without the Hazard House, sadly), a second appearance in Machias, and up to the county to a center in Houlton. We have taught the "Play Safe Be Safe" program to 380 children so far, and 51 older students have learned by interacting with the Hazard House.

We have visited small family daycares, large child care centers with 50+ children, and preschools at both colleges and churches. One day, a family's black lab "helped" us give our presentation, so Ryan presented him with his own red, plastic fire hat as we left. We have traveled over 2000 miles so far, and I would say the windshield wipers of our Honda Element have been in use about 80% of the time.

Our summer up to this point has been inspiring and hilarious at best, and interesting at the very worst. Ryan has already graduated

from college and has a teaching degree, but I will go back to Orono for one more year in the Elementary Education program. I'll be reconsidering my career decision...just kidding! We have had a wonderful time with the children this summer. We hope that we have been able to teach them the knowledge and skills that will help them to stay safe and be prepared in case of a fire.

If you would like to schedule an appointment for us to come to your daycare, preschool, or child care center, please contact Abbie and Ryan at (207) 626-3891. We will be delivering the programs until August 14th.

## NFPA ANNOUNCES FIRE PREVENTION WEEK THEME

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has announced it's theme for this year's Fire Prevention Week and posted materials for fire service organizations to use on their web site. This year's theme is *Stay Fire Smart! Don't Get Burned*.



Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, the tragic 1871 conflagration that killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres. The fire began on October 8, but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9, 1871.

This year's theme

focuses on burn awareness and prevention and in general about building a culture of fire and home safety into every home. For more information go to the url below.

www.nfpa.org



## A NOTE FROM SENATOR COLLINS ON MAINE'S MEN AND WOMEN IN THE FIRE SERVICE

It's with great pride that we acknowledge Senator Collins, and her staff, by presenting the following note in which the Senator expresses her thoughts about the fire service in Maine.

#### "Our Firefighters Deserve Praise and Assistance" Weekly Column Senator Susan Collins

Our career and volunteer firefighters are among our bravest public servants. It is difficult to imagine the courage it takes to enter a burning building or approach a blazing truck or railroad car that may be about to explode—especially when others are running in the opposite direction. We can only dimly grasp the skill and discipline it takes to rescue and tend to a fire or an accident victim in the midst of confusion and danger. At any time, any of us could easily find our lives dependent on the firefighting and rescue skills of these heroic and dedicated men and women.

The impact of firefighters extends well beyond their home towns. Not only do they routinely offer mutual assistance among towns, but as highly trained first responders, they also are a key component in state and federal preparedness plans for responding to natural disasters and terrorist attacks. Carrying out these responsibilities requires enormous effort, not to mention ample resources for recruiting and training personnel and for securing and maintaining modern equipment.

To assist with the vital mission of our nations' fire departments, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security administers the FIRE Act grants program, which includes the Assistance to Firefighters, Fire Prevention and Safety, and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grants. These programs have been invaluable to fire departments throughout the nation and right here in Maine. They help fire departments purchase new, used, or refurbished vehicles, and to obtain equipment for firefighting, interoperable

communications, chemical detection, and other purposes that are essential to first responders.

Since January of this year, 22 Maine fire and rescue departments have received funds from these grant programs, totaling nearly \$2 million. This year, fire departments in Arrowsic, Bangor, Bath, Canton, Gouldsboro, Greenbush, Hampden, Mapleton, Richmond, Springfield, Strong, Wiscasset, York, and other Maine towns have joined the ranks of those whose life-saving capabilities have been improved through these federal grants.

Since the creation of this program, Maine fire departments have been awarded more than \$50 million. To qualify for these funds, every grant requires a local effort to meet a certain percent of the need. In many cases, these federal dollars enable a community's department to obtain equipment it simply couldn't afford on its own. And in every case, the federal grants ease local financial burdens while advancing the national interest in having first responders as prepared as possible for all disasters, whether natural or manmade.

In addition to supporting Maine applications for FIRE grants, I serve as a co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Fire Services Caucus. It's the largest common-interest association of Senators and Representatives and is devoted to making the case for programs and policies that will help our firefighters do their best to protect all of us.

In recognition of my advocacy on behalf of our nation's firefighters, the National Volunteer Fire Council recently awarded me its Legislator of the Year award. To be recognized by an organization representing those who risk their lives to serve their local communities is deeply gratifying.

Our firefighters put their lives on the line at every call to save others and protect property, whether in a single house fire or in a widespread disaster. Like the members of our armed forces, they need good equipment, adequate staffing, intensive training, and public support to do their job. We owe them all a debt of gratitude and we must continue to work to help ensure

Senator Collin's Note cont'd from page 5

that they are kept as safe as possible as they protect each of us.

## JUVENILE FIRESETTER PANEL CONVENES FIRST MEETING

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

On June 17, 2008 Governor Baldacci issued Executive Order 14 FY 08/09 officially creating the Maine Juvenile Fire Safety Collaborative. The purpose of the Maine JFS Collaborative is to prevent injury, life and property losses due to fires set by children. The collaborative convened for the first time June 29<sup>th</sup>.

The group includes representatives from law enforcement, fire services, education and social and mental health services. Janet Richards, the chair of the new panel, is a member of the Governor's Children's Cabinet and serves as Deputy Commissioner of Public Safety.

It is hoped that the new JFS Collaborative along with the existing Maine Juvenile Fire Safety Program will help build a sustainable effort to reduce the frequency of fires being started by children and hence, the impact of such events.

#### STRUCTURAL STABILITY OF ENGINEERED LUMBER IN FIRE CONDITIONS ONLINE COURSE

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

Reports from United Laboratories and the National Research Council of Canada have concluded what the fire service has long suspected, and feared, about lightweight construction materials. Lightweight construction began to emerge in the 1970's and has become more popular since.

UL has put together a great online fire service training course available at the url posted

below. I would recommend that anyone not familiar with lightweight construction examine the online course to understand the implications use of these materials could have for our families, the fire service, and our communities at large. Representatives of the Engineered Wood Association cite the efficiency and "green" aspects of these products and how that makes them more economical and a better use of resources. The online course offers up another perspective worth your review.

http://www.ul.com/global/eng/pages/offerings/industries/buildingmaterials/fire/courses/structural/



#### MEFIRS – Maine Fire Incident Reporting System

	Current Statistics 2009*	Final Statistics for 2008
Total Incidents Reported:	17,718	71,667
Fires:	961	3,531**
EMS:	11,445	43,086
All others:	5,312	23,815
Fire Departments Reporting	97	181
Total Fire Dollar Loss	\$8,709,659	\$31,163,227
Civilian Fire Related Injuries	9	42
Fire Service Fire Related Injuries	11	22
Civilian Fire Related Deaths	7	14
Fire Service Fire Related Deaths	0	1

<sup>\*</sup> The Fire Marshal's Office will have all data for 2009 in by June-July of 2010.

REMINDER: MAINE NFIRS users please update your e-mail address if it is different from the address you had when registering for NFIRS. This allows us to more readily assist you with any problems you may have.

SERVICE AWARENESS! The fire service is a multitasking organization called on to do more tasks because we're in every community and sometimes because no one else will do it. That's a selling point to local policy makers come budget time. Here are three recommendations to help the fire service to better market its significance.

- 1. The fire service needs to tell its full story by documenting and marketing all that it does. Its full range of calls needs to be recorded and reported. This includes all emergency calls, all public service calls, and all services provided to the public outside and inside its stations. The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) is the system in place to document and report the activities of the fire service. For the full story to be told, its incidents need to be in NFIRS. Decisions at the local, state, and national levels that affect the fire service and the public are made based on the incidents that are in NFIRS.
- 2. The fire service must ensure that its incident reports are complete. Incident reporting software is good for making sure incidents are valid. A valid incident passes defined edits. The current standard is NFIRS 5.0 and is based upon the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) 901 coding standard. Valid incidents are used within and outside the fire service to assess the effectiveness of fire operations, prevention programs, protection systems, and training. However, a valid incident might not be a complete incident. A complete incident tells the full story; it goes beyond the standard edits. An incident report is not complete when it is initially saved by the member making the report. Additional information usually becomes available after an investigation or due to the passing of time. Once changes are known, the incident reports should be updated. For example, the cause of ignition description "under investigation" should never be the final disposition of an incident.
- 3. The fire service must use its data to "fight fires with facts". The data should be used within and outside the department. Using the data within the department helps to measure effectiveness in better resource utilization, managing costs, reducing fire service injuries, deaths, exposures, and saving property. Using the data outside the department helps to educate the public in death and injury prevention, protection of its protection of its property and contents, and the range of services that the fire service provides.

"Fight Fire with Facts"

<sup>\*\*</sup> Represents single incidents only.

#### MAINE FIREWATCH

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

The following fires occurred in Maine since this newsletter was last published back on April 30, 2009. In that time two young Maine residents lost their lives in one fire in North Berwick, Maine (see photo below). This is the second fire to claim two lives this year.



The single-family dwelling was occupied by four young people, all in their twenties, at the time of the fire, 3:35 AM. Two of the individuals escaped with

Picture by John Huff, Fosters Daily Democrat

minor injuries. Smoke alarms appeared to be operating during the fire. There were no sprinkler systems.

It was a close call for the driver of the pickup truck below. Almost immediately after the crash, individuals pulled the driver from the



truck just in time.
The truck accident resulted from the rear axle apparently breaking.

In one of the more noted fires, the controversial Grandview Topless Coffee Shop in Vassalboro sustained considerable damage in a fire believed to have been a case of arson. Fortunately seven occupants escaped the fire after being notified by an ambulance crew from Belfast who just happened to be passing by the facility. The crew stopped and woke up people sleeping in dwelling areas attached to the coffee shop. Twin girls and a 4-month-old child were among those who escaped uninjured.

## An 18 unit apartment building approximately 180 years old burned in



downtown
Orono. The
building had 23
residents many
of whom were
students at the
University of
Maine. All
occupants at the
resident during

Photo by Kate Collins, BDN

the fire escaped unharmed but are in search of a new home. The cause of the fire that burned the landmark structure is believed to be electrical in nature. Some pets also escaped the blaze though the Orono Fire Department did administer oxygen to a golden retriever expected to fully recover from the ordeal.

Perhaps the most spectacular fire in terms of size took place last week at the Cowan Mill building in Lewiston. (photos below)



Photo by Daryn Slover, Sun Journal

The Cowan Mill building was considered a landmark and according to local residents one of the first mills in the historical mill complex. The building was abandoned at the time but fire officials were concerned about the fire spreading. The fire was determined to be a case of arson. The pictures below show the fire in progress and after from different views.



Photo by Daryn Slover, Sun Journal



Photo by Justin Pelletier, Sun Journal



Photo by Daryn Slover, Sun Journal



#### This Month in Fire History

Ringling Bros, Barnum & Bailey Circus tent fire kills 168, Hartford (CT), 1944

Two munitions ships collide and explode, killing 322, Port Chicago (CA), 1944

Americans with Disabilities Act passes, greatly affecting safety codes, 1990

Quarterly of the National Fire Protection Association begins this month, 1907

Maine - July 4, 1896 Augusta, Maine - The Opera House Block fire destroys a theater, stores and offices. The cause of the fire is believed to have been fireworks. Extensive damage and heavy losses were reported. No one was killed.

## UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### SOUTHERN MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

#### \*\* Fire and Life Safety Educator I & II Certification Course to be offered at SMCC \*\*

During the fall semester Southern Maine Community College's Fire Science department will offer FIRE 205 (formerly FT-218), Fire and Life Safety Educator, a 45-hour course based on national professional qualification standards. FIRE 205 will be offered Thursdays, 1:30 PM - 4:15 PM from August 31st until December 19, 2009 @ SMCC's South Portland campus. The activity-based course provides excellent preparation for current and prospective safety educators in designing, marketing and delivering high impact risk reduction programs to community members of all ages. Course assignments include researching and documenting community risks, writing public service announcements and press releases, working with the media, developing program budgets and teaching safety workshops at SMCC's Early Childhood Education Center.

The 3-credit college course addresses the job performance requirements of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1035 (2005 edition) Fire and Life Safety Educator Levels I+II. Students who successfully complete the course can earn Maine Fire Training & Education Fire & Life Safety Educator I+II state certification by teaching 5 local community safety courses.

Steve Willis, SMCC Fire Science faculty member with more than 35 years experience in volunteer and career fire suppression, training, public education and risk reduction advocacy, will serve as lead instructor for the course. Steve will be assisted by leading experts in child learning characteristics; technical writing, data collection, analysis and public policy; Risk Watch and Play Safe, Be Safe curricula; local community best practices; communications and media; early childhood education and program management and budgeting.

Gary Keith, NFPA Vice President for Regional Operations and Education, will be a guest speaker on October 8, 2009. Gary, with local code officials and fire chiefs, will lead a discussion forum on NFPA's Sprinkler Initiative and Maine's new Statewide Building Code.

To register, contact SMCC Enrollment Services @ 207-741-5800. For more information, contact Steve Willis (207-741-5808 or swillis@smccme.edu)



#### Inspection and Testing for the Sprinkler Industry

Learn skills required to be a productive inspector and enforcer of NFPA 25. This class covers all of the various requirements of the NFPA Standards and offers a chance to learn the Sprinkler Industry's Best Practices

> August 4-6, 2009 Leominster, MA Four Points by Sheraton Leominster 99 Erdman Way Leominster, MA 01450

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\*\*\*\*\*



15th Annual Fire & Life Safety Education Conference September 23 and 24, 2009

Devens Common Center SpringHill Suites by Marriott Devens, Massachusetts

### For more information go to the following url and look under "Whats New"

http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopsagencylanding&L=3&sid=Eeops&L0=H ome&L1=Public+Safety+Agencies&L2=Massachusetts+Department+of+Fire +Services

Upcoming Events cont'd from page 8



#### 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Fire and Life Safety Education Conference

TEACHING TODAY
FOR A SAFER TOMORROW

**OCTOBER 16 & 17, 2009** 

## HOLIDAY INN AND CONFERENCE CENTER SACO, MAINE

#### 2009 SPEAKERS

Paul Schwartzman
Chief John Staley
Sr. Spec.Agt. Jessica Gotthold
Dr. Kathleen Mattei
Dr. Moana Krushiwitz
Joseph Tondorf
Rebecca Porter
Liz Maestranzi
Dr. Thomas Andrew
Ernest Grant, RN
Bill Green
Dr. Angela Mickalaide
Nancy Trench

For more information go to: http://www.ptbf.org/

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The *Maine Fire Marshal News* is an electronic publication of the Maine State Fire Marshal's Office.

Editors: Richard E. Taylor & Lori L. Gunn

To submit articles for publication contact the Fire Marshal's Office at (207) 626-3870 and ask to speak with the editors. You may also e-mail an article or comment to Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov

All articles are subject to an editorial staff review prior to inclusion. For a copy of submission requirements contact the editorial staff.

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